

*“Neither Do I Condemn You”*

John 7:53-8:11

Reading: Luke 7:36–7:50

Bethany Baptist Church  
October 11, 2020

...pray...

**Turn with me to John 7:53 (hold).** Let's talk about the story contained in the next 12 verses.

Does your NT set those verse *apart*, or make a *comment* about them...?

My **NASB** brackets these 12 verses and makes this *brief statement*: "Later *mss* **add** the story of the adulterous woman."

The *point* is, that John **didn't** write this story. He **never intended** it to appear in his gospel. It was **added** to *later copies* of the apostle's *original work*.

**Why** do Bible scholars say that...? They point to *internal & external* evidence.

Briefly...

**Internal biblical evidence** speaks to the story itself, as it appears in the Bible. **E.g.**

The story shows up in about **five different locations** (depending on the **mss** you study).

When you **compare** it to John's other writing (lots), there are **words** and **expressions** here that are *uncommon* in the rest of his works.

**External biblical evidence** speaks to the copies of John.

You **can't find** this story in the *earliest copies* of John.

When you **do** finally find it, even the early **mss** have notes that caution about its *authenticity*.

To *sum up*, few **conservative** scholars believe John penned this account.

So **why** study it!?!

Because here is an **important understanding** of this story. John **didn't** chose to *include* it in His gospel, but it's still a *true account*!

It originates from the *spoken stories* (“*oral tradition*”) of the earliest church. **E.g.** a follower of John (*Papias*) wrote about the *Adulterous Woman*.

And then someone finally took the liberty of *inserting* this compelling drama into copies of John.

So it's **not inspired/authoritative**, because it **wasn't** written with the *authority* of an **apostle's pen** or an **apostle's sponsorship**.

But it is in **complete harmony** with the *character, deeds, the story* of Jesus.

We **can** accept it as **true**, so we can **study** it as *spiritually valuable*.

**Let's start now!** 😊 **Read 7:53 – 8:11.**

Our story begins with **last day** of the fall **Feast of Tabernacles**.

On the **eighth** and **final day**, there were **two** big observances: *water* and *light*.

So, in **chapter 7** Jesus offered Himself as *Living Water*. In chapter 8 He will offer Himself as the *Light of the World*.

But **between** those **two great invitations** to **all sinners ...** (in our story today) ...

Jesus **offers forgiveness** to **one sinner**.

Which powerfully reminds *each* of us...

**Jesus forgives those who repent and believe.**

1. **The calm** (vv.53 – 2).
2. **The trap** (vv.3-6a).
3. **The challenge** (vv.6b-8).
4. **The pardon** (vv.9-11).

*The calm* (vv.53 – 2).

1. As we've seen, Jesus had been **teaching** since mid-week.
  - a. The **festival crowd** was **divided** about His words: some *confused*, some *skeptical*, but some **believed** (7:41 – “*This is the Christ!*”).
  - b. The **Jewish leaders** had again **failed** in their determined efforts to **seize Him** (7:1 – *the Jews were seeking to kill Him*; 7:32 – *the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to seize Him*).
  
2. Then the **last day**, the **great day of the Feast**, draws to a close.
  - a. The **crowd** goes home. The **temple guards** go home. The **Sanhedrin** goes home.
  - b. But **Jesus** goes to the *Mount of Olives*.
    - i. And perhaps eventually, on to the home of His friends **Mary, Martha, & Lazarus**. Their home in Bethany was on the on slopes of the Mt. of Olives.
  - c. But I believe that **first** He stopped to **pray**, and pray into the night. Prayer was Jesus' habit. It's not difficult to believe the Lord prayed for...
    - i. The enormous **festival crowd**, who had been *listening* to His teaching.
    - ii. And for His **determined enemies** (“*Father, forgive them*”).
  - d. And as our *story unfolds*, I am certain He prayed for a **woman**.
    - i. A woman He'd undoubtedly **never met**.
    - ii. A woman who needed His **help**.
    - iii. A woman who seemed to be **racing** towards the **brink** of *destruction* and *eternal condemnation*.
  - e. Because while Jesus was **praying**, the woman was **sinning**...

3. The **next morning**, Jesus entered the *temple courts* again. The **Feast** was over, but **Jerusalem** would still be *packed with people*.
  - a. When **Jesus' presence** was known, a **crowd** began to gather again.
    - i. **V.2** (lit.) – *all the people were coming to Him*
    - ii. The **Gr. grammar** of v.2 indicates the people just kept *coming* and *coming*; so the crowd kept *growing* and *growing*!
  - b. Beloved, **what do people need** more than anything else in the world...? We need **God's truth**!
  - c. So **Jesus** *sat down* in the temple court *and began to teach them*.

**And while Jesus was *teaching*, that same woman was *coming*.**

***It was a trap! Read vv.3-6a.***

1. Jesus' teaching was **interrupted** by a **group of men *dragging* a woman through the crowd, to *center* of the courtyard, and *squarely in front* of Jesus.**
  - a. The men were **scribes** and **Pharisees**.
    - i. **Scribes** (or *lawyers*) were *experts* in the Mosaic Law. Often they came from the ranks of the **Pharisees**.
    - ii. **Pharisees** (~6000) were *Jewish laymen* who were strictly devoted to the **Law**, and who constructed hundreds of **legalistic rules** that they imagined helped them live more holy lives.
  - b. These men were *leading* a **woman**. History has given her this *sad name*: "*The Adulterous Woman*."
    - i. They place her in the **middle**. The **middle** of the *courtyard*, the **middle** of the *crowd*. In **front** of Christ.
    - ii. *In my mind*, I see her **looking down** at the *floor of the temple*.
2. And then, the **fastidious Pharisees** break the silence. Their tone is surprisingly (*deceptively*) respectful: "*Teacher...*"
  - a. "*Teacher (4), this woman has been caught in adultery, **in the very act**.*"
  - b. The **Greek** word is **μοι και α**. **Adultery** is violating your marriage vows by redirecting your **physical** or even your **emotional affections** to someone who is **not** your *husband* or *wife*.
    - i. This can be understood to include *living together, pornography, homosexuality, transfer of emotional support & affection*.
    - ii. **The sin of adultery implies the sanctity of marriage.** (Jesus, Mark 10 – "*What God has joined together let no man put asunder.*")

- iii. The **biblical blueprint for marriage** is God's *only plan* for an *intimate relationship* between a *man* and *woman*. It is **definite** (*man* and *woman*) and it is **exclusive** (*just those two*).
  - iv. Because of this, adultery is strictly prohibited in the Bible (**Ex 20:14**, God says, "*Thou shall not commit adultery.*")
- c. The Pharisees' *accusation* is *emphatic*: "*...this woman has been caught in adultery, **in the very act**...*"
- i. **Who** caught her...? Her **lover's wife**...? Her **own husband**...?
  - ii. Consider with me **7:53** – *Everyone went to his own home...*
    - 1. Could it be that one of **these Pharisees** (a member of the *Sanhedrin*)...
    - 2. *...returned* to **his own home** and *caught his own wife in the very act!*
    - 3. Then decided to use her as **bait**...
3. Because this *sad scene* is *simply* a **trap** (**read vv.5-6a**)!
- a. The **scribes** are correct, of course, the **Law of Moses** clearly condemns **adultery**. It is a **capital crime** to violate God's pattern for marriage.
    - i. But **they** knew the answer **before they came!**
    - ii. So **why** do they need to bring *this woman* and put *this question* before Jesus...?
    - iii. And where is **her lover**, by the way!?! Wouldn't they need to **bring him, too?**
    - iv. They **don't care** about those details, because **this** is a *trap!*

- b. Look again at the end of v.5. Their language is **emphatic**. “**You then, what do you say?**” **Moses** says...but what do **You** say!?!
- i. If Jesus urges them to **free** her, they will paint Him as *lawless*.
    1. They’ve already cast Him as a *Sabbath-breaker*, now they’ll condemn as a *marriage-breaker*.
  - ii. If Jesus agrees to **executing** her, ...
    1. They will **whisper to the crowd** that He’s really **not** so *compassionate*, after all.
    2. They will **report to the Romans** that He is *promoting* an **unauthorized execution**.

**The trap is set. The Pharisees are pressing. The crowd is listening. The woman stares down at the ground....**

*Jesus' disarming challenge (read vv.6b-9).*

1. To this point, Jesus has been **silent**. Now He **bends over**, almost as if *ignoring* the Pharisees.
2. And He begins to *write on the ground* of the temple courtyard.
  - a. **What** was He *writing*? Could the **men** see? Could the **woman**?
  - b. **What** was He *writing*? We **aren't** told.
    - i. The **most popular notion** is that He traces the **names** and the **sins** of the *woman's accusers*!
    - ii. I wonder if He *sums up His own teaching* from the **Sermon on the Mount** (Matt 6:27,28) – “*You have heard that is was said, ‘You shall not commit **adultery**’; but **I** say to you that **everyone** who **looks** at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her **in his heart.**”*
    - iii. *Friend, that principle, and its companion principles regarding **anger** and **honesty**, should make **each** of us *duck*!*
3. **Jesus** has been *silent*, but (7) the **accusers** just keep right on *pushing*: “*what do **You** say...do we **stone** her...is **Moses** still in play...what do **You** say!?!”*
  - a. Jesus’ **answer** must certainly reflect what He has *traced on the ground*.
  - b. It reflects the very Law they *appeal* to, which (Deut 17:7) demands that the *accusers* and *eyewitnesses* be the **first** to *throw a stone*.
  - c. And Jesus’ solemn response is **wise** beyond the *storied judgments* of **King Solomon**.
  - d. **You** see in v.7, perhaps you’ve *said it yourself*... “*He who is **without sin** among you, let **him** be the **first** to throw a stone at her....”*

4. It's just **one** *statement*. Then Jesus *bends back down* and *resumes* His writing. The **courtyard**, except perhaps the *amazed murmuring of the crowd*, is *silent*.
- a. Then the scribes and Pharisees begin to **leave**. The **oldest first** - the *oldest* are the *wisest*. And the **oldest** have years of *accumulated sin* now *accusing them*.
  - b. The **people**, undoubtedly, are **watching** their *every move*, **weighing** their *response* against Jesus' *piercing admonition*.
  - c. They **leave**, but are they *truly repentant*, or *humiliated...?*
  - d. Here is **Pastor John MacArthur's** insight: "*Ironically, those who came to put Jesus to shame – left ashamed; those who came to condemn the woman – went away condemned.*"

**Jesus' timeless admonition has *disarmed* their trap.**

***But Jesus is not finished, the Judge has a pardon to grant (read vv.9b-11).***

1. The **crowd** is undoubtedly *watching* and *listening*. But they **fade** into the *background* of *our drama*. The **spotlight** is focused in the *center* of the *courtyard*. On **Jesus**, and the **astounded adulterous**.
2. Then our **Lord** *straightens up*. His **bearing** is *majestic* and *magisterial*.
  - a. In **John 5** Jesus claimed that the **Father** has given **all judgment** to the **Son**.
  - b. So we have the **Judge of the Universe** standing in the **flesh of man**.
  - c. “*Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?*”
3. “**No one, Lord...**”
4. “**I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more...**”
  - a. This is not an *acquittal*, it’s a *royal pardon*.
  - b. Jesus does not *acquit*, He *forgives!*
  - c. She is *guilty*, but now she is also *free....*
5. What is **required** for **forgiveness** like this?
  - a. Our Savior is clear: **repentance**.
  - b. Jesus allows her to **go** (her *accusers* are gone, her *sin* is forgiven), but He commands her to **repent** (*change*), “*From now on, sin no more.*”
  - c. And of course *repentance* always implies *faith*. You **won’t** *turn* from your sin, if you **won’t** *believe* Jesus’ offer.
6. Friends, **you** are as *immoral* as the woman. **You** are as *hypocritical* as the Pharisees.
  - a. Yet these **glorious words** can be yours: “*Neither do I condemn you.*”
  - b. And this **saving command** can be yours: “**Go. From now on, sin no more.**”

It's **not too difficult** for me to picture myself *standing* in that courtyard, *filled* with dread, *eyes fixed* on the floor, *caught* as it were *in the very act*.

Yet it is **now not difficult** to picture myself *standing* in the courtyard, *filled* with wonder, *eyes fixed* on **Jesus**, "*Neither do I condemn you.*"

Aren't those the **most wonderful words** you can imagine!

The Bible promises that we can be **forgiven, pardoned**.

The **condition** of forgiveness is *faith in Jesus* (God's *Son, died* on the cross to pay for your sins, that God *raised* Him from the dead on the third day, that He is *alive*)

And because you *believe*, you **repentance** from your sins.

Isn't this the most *glorious promise* you've ever heard: "*Neither do I condemn you.*"

Isn't this a *command* you'd be a *fool* to refuse: "*Go, from now on, sin no more.*"

...pray...